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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0299
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RUYNAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 4965
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 7361
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 3690
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 5613
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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - EU EXPANSION AND IRAQ-SYRIA TIES

LEAD STORIES: Domestic news predominated in all Friday morning dailies, particularly the ruling coalition's tax policy for fiscal 2008 and the Osaka District Court's proposal for an out-of-court settlement in a case involving Hepatitis C infection from tainted blood products.

¶1. "Accommodating Varying Interests of Members Makes Makes Lisbon Treaty Meaningless" A Brussels correspondent for the liberal Mainichi wrote (12/13): "EU leaders signed the Lisbon Treaty on Thursday calling for the creation of the posts of 'president' and 'foreign minister' in preparation for the anticipated EU expansion, with the goals of enhancing its diplomatic prowess and undertaking more democratic and efficient organization management.... However, the pact is problematic, as there are various inconsistencies in it due to members' differing opinions.... A primary difference revolves around whether the entity should become a 'federal state' or a 'union of sovereign states.' If the leaders fail to present a clear picture of the organization's future status, it is likely that more citizens will distance themselves from the EU."

¶2. "US Gives Green Light to Resumption of Iraq-Syria Ties?" The liberal Asahi's Damascus-based reporter wrote (12/13): "The foreign ministers of Iraq and Syria agreed in Damascus on Thursday to resume operation of a pipeline between the two countries, which was damaged in 2003 during the Iraq war. The two nations appear

keen to jumpstart the project, as Iraq wants to find more buyers for its oil in order to secure money for reconstruction, while Syria hopes to ensure oil supplies and end its international isolation. The Bush administration's policy change appears to be behind the resumption of 'economic bond' between the two Arab states."

SCHIEFFER